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ABSTRACT

From the time he was four years old until the day he went to college, Horace A. Judson was a migrant. His life as a migrant in the fields, the camps, the communities, and the numerous schools in which he was enrolled is described. The problems of migrant workers are not merely the problems of poor people but rather problems of minorities struggling to overcome racism. The qualities needed for teachers of migrants are not different from those needed by other teachers except perhaps a concern for others and an ability to respect, understand, and believe in the worth of each individual. A teacher cannot really teach someone he does not respect. A student without self respect cannot really benefit from the educational process. Emphasis should no longer be placed on the attainment of a certain grade level by a certain age, but rather on the concept of learning as a lifelong process. (JN)

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Reflections of a Former Migrant

By Horace A. Judson

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Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Compensatory, Urban, and Supplementary Programs
P. O. Box 8717
Baltimore — Washington International Airport
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1978

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

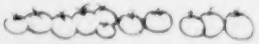
From the time he was four years old until the day he went to college, Horace A. Judson was a migrant. As a five-year-old he followed the sun and the seasons with his family in the bean, asparagus, strawberry, melon, tomato and onion fields that stretch from Florida to New York.

In his keynote address to the Eighth Annual Migrant Education Institute at Salisbury State College in June 1976, Dr. Judson, now Vice President of Academic Affairs at Morgan State University, talked about his life as a migrant in the fields, the camps, the communities, and the numerous schools in which he was enrolled.

With simplicity, dignity, and compassion his reflections are captured in the following pages. So too is reflected the human quality of Horace Judson whose intimacy provides hope to us all for understanding migrants as the people "who struggle and sacrifice, who love their family, who are sensitive and human beyond all understanding and explanations." Such positive attributes of "life up the road" stand in stark relief against a background of tragically inadequate housing, medical care, and working conditions. *Reflections of a Former Migrant* is more than a series of recollections and accounts about migrancy; it is a statement about life and caring.

"With some reluctance, I have agreed to share with you some of my experiences as a migrant worker and offer some personal observations for whatever they are worth."

I thank you for inviting me to speak to you on this occasion. I am pleased to be here and delighted to see firsthand this organization which is performing such a vital function in a long ignored area of education in this country.



My presence this morning is a bit unusual for me. I am an administrator and a chemist. As an administrator, I normally make reports and evaluate and formulate plans and proposals. As a chemist and a professor, I am accustomed to lecturing and presenting scientific data which often draw conclusions and make implications. My training dictates that I speak objectively about experimental results in the third person, using the passive voice. This morning I have been asked to speak of my personal experiences which are in part very subjective and which necessitate my speaking in the first person, active voice. With some reluctance, I have agreed to share with you some of my experiences as a migrant worker and offer some personal observations for whatever they are worth.

"The problems of migrant workers are not merely the problems of poor people without roots. They are also the problems of white and non-white minorities in a society still struggling to overcome the institution of racism."

I was a member of a migrant family from the time I was four years old until the day I went to college back in August of 1959, when I arose one morning in a camp in Hamilton, New York, went to a bean field, and picked 27 bushels of string beans by 2:00 o'clock. I returned to camp, took a bath in a number two tin tub in a room that was a converted chicken house, packed my bags, and drove to college. I might add that as early as the age of five, I worked by requirement and understanding.

My family, composed of my grandmother, my aunt, and me for most of those years, sharecropped in South Florida, which was home for us in the winter months. When we were not in Florida, we were a part of the eastern stream of migrant labor, composed mostly of blacks, some Puerto Ricans, and a few whites. It is my understanding that the other two streams operating in the western and central states are composed mostly of Mexican-Americans.

The problems of migrant workers are not merely the problems of poor people without roots. They are also the problems of white and non-white minorities in a society still struggling to overcome the institution of racism. The system of migrant labor in this country is an exploitive system resulting from classism and racism. Our socioeconomic system ensures that there will be people available to be exploited in this manner.

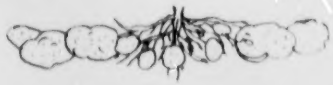
My family started going "up the road," as Floridians called it, because there was no other alternative for us. So as a four-year-old I started learning my eastern U. S. geography firsthand, the hard way, and for the next 14 years I traveled back and forth from Florida to New York.

We harvested beans in Rocky Mount, North Carolina; beans, tomatoes, and strawberries on the Eastern Shore of Virginia; beans between Princess Anne and Pocomoke; asparagus near Cambridge (dur-

ing this time I learned what a Cumberland Gap was); peaches in Delaware; beans, tomatoes, blueberries, beets, green peas, and onions in such places in New Jersey as Seabrook, Bridgetown, and Cedarville (our nickname for Cedarville was "Skeeterville" because of the summer plague of mosquitoes); beans, apples, and potatoes in New York (Hamilton, Utica, Sterling, and Waterville). We would start early in North Carolina and finish late in New York, and often return to the Eastern Shore of Virginia on our way back to Florida.

As many of you know, we lived in everything from old army barracks and old deserted houses to converted barns and chicken coops. We've been places where toilet facilities were simply the nearby woods. I can tell you that no one went bird watching in those woods.

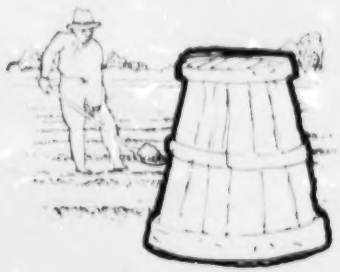
While there were a few crew chiefs (contractors) who insisted that children in their camps attend school during the school year, most did not encourage or actively discourage school attendance because it decreased the size of their labor force and thus the size of their income.



Probably most of you have heard of or witnessed and maybe some of you have experienced the harsh, grinding, dehumanizing aspects of the migrant life. No matter what you have heard, it could not have been an exaggeration. The negatives are very negative indeed, but often overlooked are the positives which are very important, for they relate not to the oppressive, exploitative migrant system, but to the enduring, unyielding, hopeful people who are caught up in the system—a people who most of the larger society would rather forget. Too many see in the migrant only the oppressed, the lost, the hopeless, the uninspired, the violent, the

drunk, the insensitive, the short-lived, the uneducated, and the ineducable. They cannot or will not see people who struggle and sacrifice, who love their family, who are sensitive and human beyond all understanding and explanation.

Let me say unequivocally that I am not here this morning to stand before you as a person who, because of some special talent, intelligence, and perserverance, escaped an almost inescapable system and by virtue of sheer personal abilities made a success of myself. No! A thousand times no! I was determined and able and worked hard but I know of so many who were just as determined, if not more; just as able, if not more; who worked just as hard, if not harder. Many made it, but most did not. I cannot tell you why, except to call it fate or the will of God or the good fortune to receive help at the critical moment. I personally know of many migrant children who succeeded, became doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, etc., against all odds. Even though the percentage is small, the numbers are significant.



"Too many see in the migrant only the oppressed, the lost, the hopeless, the uninspired, the violent, the drunk, the insensitive, the short-lived, the uneducated, and the uneducable. They cannot or will not see people who struggle and sacrifice, who love their family, who are sensitive and human beyond all understanding and explanation."

"I have witnessed amazing talent and abilities among migrant workers. There was a great deal of common sense among these people. I have often seen more common sense in an alcoholic migrant worker than is demonstrated by many college professors."

There were always some very serious and dedicated high school and college students who were migrant workers during my time. The college students became migrant workers in the summertime because black college students could not find other employment. Most of these students had been a part of the migrant labor force even before entering college.

I have witnessed amazing talent and abilities among migrant workers. There were individuals who could repair almost anything, electrical or mechanical, and yet could not speak articulately or even read. There were persons with great mathematical ability. If you have ever witnessed a large game of craps or a card game called "Georgia Skin" with all the patterns of numerous side-betting, and watched the participants demonstrate a functional understanding of laws of probability and incisive knowledge about human psychology, then you too must have been amazed. I have witnessed talented musicians and artists and marveled at the wisdom of pragmatic philosophers who explained life, death, and love, understandably and simply. I have experienced acts of human kindness in migrant

camps that are inexpressible. Such acts were not exceptional occurrences, merely exceptional acts.

There was a great deal of common sense among these people. I have often seen more common sense in an alcoholic migrant worker than is demonstrated by many college professors. Robert Ingersoll has said:

> It is a thousand times better to have common sense without education than to have education without common sense.

I agree, but would add that it is even better to have education with common sense.

My experiences in school were similar to those of most any migrant child. Perhaps in high school I spent a larger percentage of the school year in one school (in Florida) than was the case for most migrant students. We never finished the term where we started and often did not finish the school year in any school. It was quite normal for us in Florida to leave school in late April or mid-May before the term was completed.

My earliest recollection that I was regarded as an oddity occurred when I started the second grade in upstate New York. I was seven years old and in the second grade. The teacher of that small rural school simply refused to believe that a seven-year-old migrant child could be a second grader. At first she regarded me as confused, and when I persisted, she regarded me as arrogant. She then angrily insisted that I stop lying, go to the first grade, and behave myself. She never attempted an evaluation of my educational experiences, but presumed my unaccomplishment. I remember vividly how frustrated and hurt I was when she gave me first grade books to read and would not allow me to attempt a second grade book. I was finally

placed in the second grade after my aunt insisted that I be allowed to demonstrate my competency for grade two work. That same teacher, however, would not allow me to participate in class projects because she said that she could never be sure when I might be leaving, and her time and materials would have been wasted. I, along with other migrant children, were outsiders and curiosities, and this was intensified by our being a small black minority in a system which had no other blacks, as well as our being children of migrants. We were racially, culturally, and socioeconomically different. In short, we were a problem and a bother, and we knew it.

My later educational experience and problems were not much different. In Seabrook, New Jersey, an attempt was made to place me in the fourth grade even though I was in the sixth, again with no attempt at ascertaining grade level, not even by performance testing. There were frequent fights with the local students for all of the obvious reasons, and more likely than not, the migrant student was adjudged the trouble maker. Often local students were advised to stay clear of us at all times. Of course, our academic records were never where we needed them in time.

I understand that as a result of the "Migrant Amendment" to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, many of the problems of migrant education that existed prior to the mid-1960's have been addressed. I understand that you have a nationwide computer system that facilitates the transfer of the academic records of migrant students in a matter of hours. With the federal government providing funds, you have been able to attract and train committed teachers who are sensitive to the problems and needs of the migrant student. The Title I amendment and the establishment of organizations such as yours across the nation are certainly steps in the right direction. However, with the economic picture

being what it is, I know that whatever funds you are presently receiving are too few, that whatever support is given is too small, and that most likely the funds that are committed to the education of migrants are probably being taken from some other educational budget. That practice on the part of federal, state, and local governments is becoming all too common.

You face the problems of elementary and secondary education in general as well as those problems peculiar to migrant education. Ironically, some of the problems that were thought of as being more prevalent in Migrant Education and/or Minority Education a few years ago are common throughout all of education today. The verbal and quantitative skills of the nation's students continue to decline each year. The answer obviously is not simply more money or more educational technology for migrant education or education in general. To the contrary, the problems have multiplied in the face of ever-increasing technology. I think it is an important signal that some of our most prestigious school systems are returning to an emphasis on the three R's. The answer is to be found in the teachers and the students rather than in money and technology. History supports Eric Hoffer's position that:

"A true talent will make do with any technique."

The only essentials in the educational enterprise are a teacher and a student; a teacher who learns as well as teaches and a student who teaches as well as learns.

The qualities needed for teachers of migrants are probably not different from those needed by any other teacher, except maybe in degree, professional dedication, subject area mastery and, above all, respect and concern for others, as well as an abiding understanding and belief in the worth of each individual. You cannot really teach someone you do not respect. A student without self-respect cannot maximally benefit from the educational process, if at all.

The Reverend Howard Cornish, Director of the Morgan Christian Center who retired this year after 49 years, has a favorite sermon, "What Every Man Needs," which is:

> A work to do,
> A love to share,
> A God he can trust, and
> A self to respect.

Eric Hoffer reinforces the need for self-respect with different words:

> It is not love of self, but hatred of self which is at the root of the troubles that afflict the world.

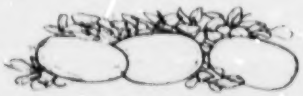
And finally, in this regard, someone else has poignantly concluded:

> That life is one long struggle to think well of yourself.

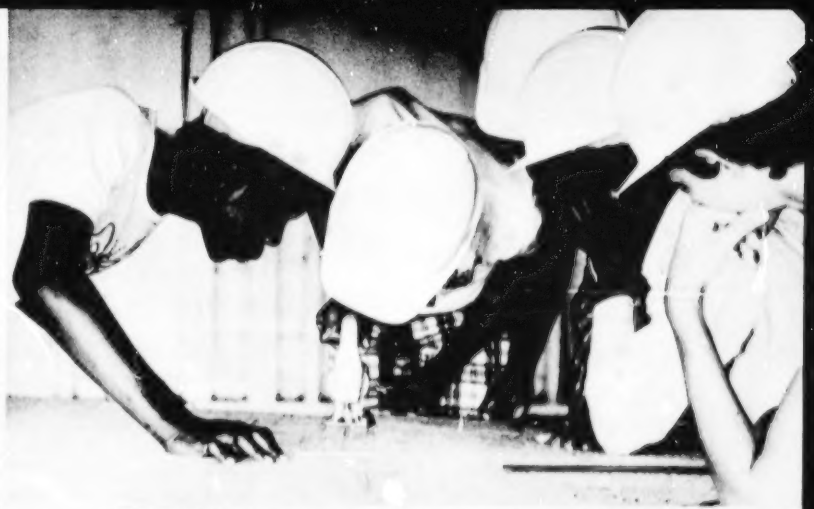
Self-respect is a necessary prerequisite and an essential continuous element in the educational process. As teachers of migrant students, you can have no greater goal than to help students establish a sense of self-worth if they do not have it, and to maintain it if they do. By the same token, you can commit no greater travesty than to erode some vulnerable student's positive self-image.

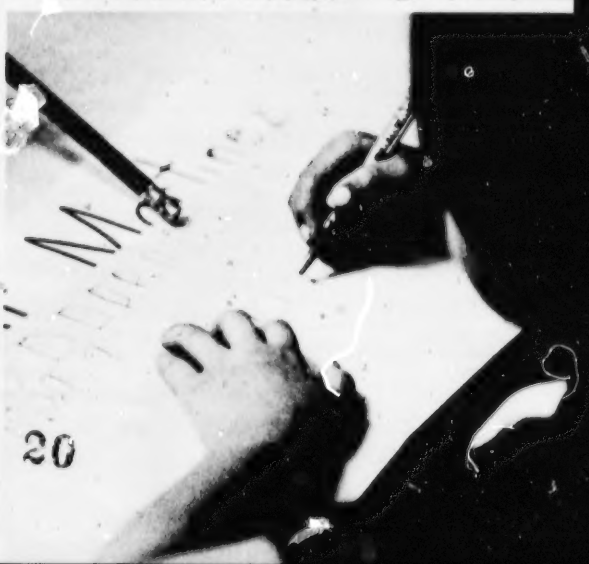
I particularly appreciate the characterization of a teacher given by Gibran in *The Prophet*. I think it is especially relevant for Migrant Education because Gibran speaks of no less than love and emphasizes the need for understanding and respecting the value of individual differences:

> Then said a teacher, Speak to us of Teaching.
> And he said: No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawn of your knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, give not of his wisdom but rather his faith and his lovingness.
>
> If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind . . .



"The qualities needed for teachers of migrants are probably not different from those needed by any other teacher, except maybe in degree, professional dedication, subject area mastery and, above all, respect and concern for others, as well as an abiding understanding and belief in the worth of each individual."

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"You cannot really teach someone you do not respect. A student without self-respect cannot maximally benefit from the educational process, if at all."

Many of us in education are finally realizing that we must no longer place the emphasis on the attainment of a certain grade level by a certain age, but rather on the concept of learning as a lifelong process. Commitment of effort and quality of accomplishment must be promoted.

You cannot allow yourself to exercise the immoral arrogance which defines certain people as being incapable of education beyond certain levels. The more that is known about the validity of diagnostic instruments, the more limited they become in their usefulness. More importantly, we cannot even begin to understand the indomitability of the human spirit. It has been said that human nature seems to endow every man with the ability to size up everybody but himself. The real tragedy is that we are not only unable to size up ourselves, but we do such a poor job on others.

You should approach each student believing in the capability of that student and committed to facilitating in every possible manner that student's realization of maximum potential without prescribing the limits of that potential.

The example of one of my recent chemistry students is not unusual to the experience of sensitive educators. This particular student was the product of an educational system which allowed him to graduate without

being able to read or write adequately. He failed the first two exams miserably and fared poorly on laboratory exercises. Since I had talked with him informally, I was aware of his ability to reason. He was a hard working, very curious student, but since his vocabulary was inadequate, he could not follow directions and could not give the answers because he did not know what the questions were. Believing in him, I worked with him until ultimately he believed in himself. In his senior year he presented prize-winning papers to the Student-Affiliates of the American Chemical Society and the Beta Kappa Chi National Scientific Honor Society. He graduated with high honors and is presently a research chemist with a major company while attending graduate school. He was one of my brightest students ever.

I was in Florida about a week ago, and since I knew I would be talking with you today, I inquired about several persons who were migrants during my time. One is now an alcoholic often seen staggering along the streets of my hometown. He is my age but looks at least 15 years older. Three of his brothers, however, have finished college; one of the three is a teacher and another is a secondary school administrator.

Another woman, who had not finished high school the last time I saw her, is now married, working, and attending a community college at night. I remember her as being shy, non-participative, and seemingly always embarrassed. I am sure that many of her earlier teachers would have predicted failure for her and they, more than likely, acted in a self-fulfilling prophecy manner. Somehow, somewhere, somebody or something reached her.

Contrary to the belief of some teachers, sincerity cannot effectively be faked. Most students, but especially those with the life experiences of a

migrant child, can normally spot a phony very easily. They may not register outwardly their recognition; they may keep the hurt and distrust within; nevertheless, the damage will have been done. Your students will often listen to what you mean rather than what you say, despite your desire to the contrary.

"Many of us in education are finally realizing that we must no longer place the emphasis on the attainment of a certain grade level by a certain age, but rather on the concept of learning as a lifelong process."

You who are involved in migrant education can ill afford superficiality and insincerity. You must believe in what you are doing and in the potentials and prospects of your students.

Allow me to re-emphasize — you who are involved in migrant education can ill afford superficiality and insincerity. You must believe in what you are doing and in the potentials and prospects of your students. You cannot show loss of faith no matter how frustrating the situation. If this is not possible, it would be far better, especially for your students, that you change professions.

I trust that all of you are competent, sincere professionals dedicated to the success of the students entrusted to you. Please believe that you can make a difference. I and others like me know that you can.

In closing, I would like to share one of my favorite thoughts expressed in a quote by Henry Drummond:

> In the pursuit of happiness half of the world is on the wrong scent. They think it consists in having and getting, and in being served by others. Happiness is really found in giving and serving others!

I commend you for your commitment to the education of the migrant, and I wish you continued happiness.

Thanks again for your kind invitation and attention.

Afterword

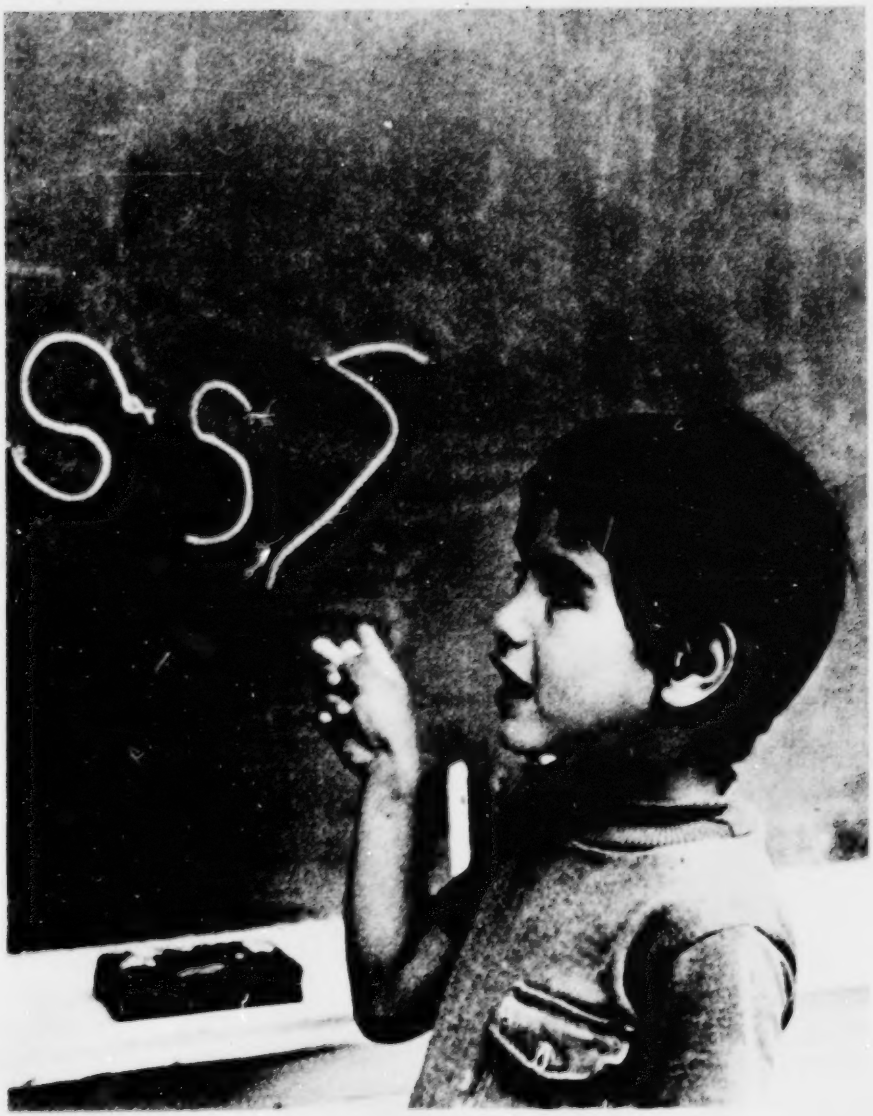
Dr. Judson's comments are most heartening and have direct implications for all involved in the education of migrant children. The word "migrant" is used to define a lifestyle. Essentially, children are children.

Because they move with their families following the seasonal crops and waterways, these children must adjust to frequent changes in location, teachers, classmates, and curriculum. Just as their life is itinerant, so is their education. As a consequence, they often lag behind in school work, especially in the areas of reading, language, and mathematics. In addition, the needs of migrant children are very basic. Most suffer from the effects of inadequate food, clothing, and housing; many also have health problems. These realities, combined with geographic and ethnic barriers, challenge all of us in education to understand the uniqueness of migrant children and to effectively meet their needs. In so doing, we can make a difference.

In his comments, Dr. Judson made a statement which, in closing, I shall repeat: "You who are involved in migrant education can ill afford superficiality and insincerity. You must believe in what you are doing and in the potentials and prospects of your students."

It was because teachers believed in the potentials of Horace Judson that he was able to leave the migrant fields to enter college. I hope that his success story and his reflections about migrancy will be an encouragement to all who read this publication.

Percy V. Williams
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Compensatory, Urban,
and Supplementary Programs



Horace A. Judson
The Man

Born August 7, 1941, Miami, Florida

Academic Training:

Institution	Location	Major	Degree
Dillard High School (1956-59)	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	—	—
Lincoln University (1959-63)	Lincoln Univ., Pa.	Chemistry	A.B.
Cornell University (1963-69)	Ithaca, N.Y.	Physical-Organic Chem.	Ph.D.

Awards, Honors, Fellowships, Activities:

High School
- Valedictorian
- Editor of School Paper, "The Panther's Paw"
- Football, Track, Baseball (Captain)

College
- Cum Laude
- *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*
- American Chemical Society Area Award
- Editor of the Yearbook
- Football, Wrestling (Captain), Baseball (Captain)

Graduate School
- Teaching Assistantship (1963-1965)
- Dupont Award for Meritorious Teaching Assistants (1964)
- Research Fellow (1965-1969)

Professional
- *Who's Who Among American Men and Women of Science*
- *Who's Who in the East*
- *Who's Who Among Black Americans*
- *Outstanding Young Men of America*

Teaching Experience:

Assistant Professor, Bethune-Cookman College, Daytona, Fla. 1969
Assistant Professor, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md. 1969-1972
Associate Professor, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md., 1972-1974
Professor, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md., 1974-

Administrative Experience:

Associate Dean of the College, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md., 1973-1974
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md., 1974-1975
Vice President for Academic Affairs, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Md., 1975-

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